Teaching the Visually Handicapped

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Examination of the above-listed difficulties certainly shows that to sponsor student participation is not easy. But it does not condemn such sponsorship as unwise. It merely emphasizes a truth we should never forget, that no method, no equipment, no textbook, can ever relieve us of our personal task of exerting influence on human wills "with all the patience of a teacher," as St. Paul said. A school is a place where mature personalities influence immature ones. In student self-government, as one teacher remarked, "anything is possible if the sponsor is holy enough."

Educational Values of Participation

Why should we take this difficult and time-consuming approach to character training in high school? The basic reason would seem to be the very difficulty of the task. For if human freedom is so hard to use wisely, and yet by the ordination of God we all must use it, the task of learning how to handle one's own will is surely deserving of professional time and effort.

Specific values that Catholic high school teachers see in the student sharing of school responsibilities include:

Practice in planning and organization.

Responsibility, including the bearing of the brunt of failure, even financial failure.

Loyalty and the reduction of criticism, arising from better rapport between faculty and students, deeper interest in and appreciation of the Catholic school, and more adequate guidance.

Not only community-mindedness, but the necessary citizenship techniques to implement it — taking active part in campaigns, elections, floor discussion.

Practical Recommendations

Before finally undertaking student participation, principal, adviser-to-be, and faculty will want to study and plan carefully. Perhaps all that has been said in this article may be pivoted in a few basic principles which the whole faculty must accept and successfully get across to the student body that is going to be asked to participate actively in student affairs:

The mature human personality (one able freely to choose good) is the most sacred of created things. Its education is worth any price.

All learning is self-learning (*cf.* St. Thomas, *De magistro*); the teacher is a catalyst, a guide to inspire self-action, correct it when it is wrong, reward it with approval when it is right, thus encouraging further attempts.

Divine authority demands docile submission, but many areas of human life are matters of choice, and in a totalitarian age it is particularly important to make sure that such areas will not be controlled by wrong influences on students who are too passive.

Once the principles are established (as, theoretically, they already are in every Catholic school) there are some practical preliminaries to adoption of student participation. A semester or year of preparatory discussions will build up practical appreciation in the students of what student participation can do for them. Principal and faculty will decide what problems can be entrusted to the students.

Indirect guidance technique, with sufficient trust on the part of both students and faculty, will insure harmony. Young people are enthusiastic, but inexperienced, and so should be made to understand that their ideas may at times be imprudent or unwise, and that even in designated "student council areas" a good leader will take advice. Teachers tend to be perfectionists, but should concede that it may be better to have students make mistakes now and then than for clocklike maidenly precision to prevail. Machines, they should remember, often run more smoothly than men, but would they prefer machines to men?

A definite program of home-room guidance in which the leadership qualifications are taught is necessary before trusting students with elections. Most high school teachers know how much "date rating" and other characteristics not *apropos* to the situation influence student votes.

If, in consideration of all the material presented on the subject, faculty members are willing to sacrifice the artificiality of the formal garden for a more spontaneous though less predictable growth in human responsibility, the student council wisely conducted would seem to hold definite value for Catholic high schools.

Teaching the Visually Handicapped

*Sister M. Jamesine, O.S.U.**

MEMBERS of human society enjoy certain basic political, social, and human rights, among the last being the right to function at a maximum level of personal satisfaction and social usefulness. The visually handicapped as well as the normally sighted have the right to as healthy a body as is humanly possible for them to have; they have the right to an education which is adapted to their needs and in accord with their religious beliefs; they have the right to social equality with sighted beings, and the right to economic independence which is a blackout of fear and want. These rights and many others which flow from human nature itself should insure the position of the visually handicapped in society and enable them to establish themselves successfully therein.

The attitude of Christian society toward the handicapped includes a deeper aspect. Human beings have an intrinsic dignity which is a thing apart from any consideration of defect, enfeeblement, repulsiveness, or handicap. Human dignity is a precious privilege and a tremendous trust tabernacled within all men without exception, a quality inherent in man by his very nature. This is the cardinal principal underlying the Christian attitude toward the handicapped.

How are educators to apply these principles? We must recognize the visually handicapped child as the subject of certain rights and realize in what measure it is our duty to aid him in the attainment of those rights. As Catholic educators we go a step further and claim our specific duty, namely our obligation to provide a Catholic education for all our Catholic children including the handicapped. Their right to an education adapted to their needs and in accord with their religious beliefs obviously implies the duty on our part to supply that education. In many instances we have had to turn away the handicapped, not because they cannot do the work but because the work has not been adjusted to their needs, not because they cannot reach our goal but

*Sight-Saving Class, Our Mother of Sorrows School, 774 Eastern Parkway, Louisville 8, Ky.

Scenes in the Sight Saving Class. The tape recorder, pictures, textbooks in clear type, large chalk, pencils with dark lead, green chalkboards, and bulletin typewriters are some of the features.

because the goal has not been placed within their reach.

The Visually Handicapped Child

The term, *visually handicapped,* includes two specific groups, namely the *blind* and the *partially seeing*. Here we are considering the partially seeing child, who, with the aid of suitable facilities and proper medical care is capable of gaining much knowledge through the channel of vision. The educational needs of the partially seeing child differ from those of the blind who must substitute the sense of touch for that of sight, whereas the partially seeing child still has the sense of sight. More specifically, the partially seeing child, educationally speaking, is the pupil whose vision is impaired to the point where his limitation may retard his regular grade progress or his vision become further impaired by the use of regular grade equipment. Children falling into this category are those whose visual acuity ranges between 20/70 and 20/200 in the better eye after all medical and optical care has been provided. Others included in this group are those with progressive eye difficulties or diseases which seriously affect vision. Children who are recovering from eye injuries and operations may also need special educational and psychological help for a period of time. Ultimately, any child who in the opinion of the ophthalmologist needs particular training because of his difficulty should be given consideration by the educational authorities according to the recommendations of the doctor.

It would be unreasonable to expect that the child with seriously impaired vision should or could take all class instruction with a normally visioned group under a regular classroom situation. Should we then draw the conclusion that the partially seeing child should be segregated in a group of his own kind to receive his education? This would be tantamount to adding handicap to handicap, for the partially seeing child is normal in all respects with the exception of his particular physical handicap. He should be enrolled in a class without sight difficulties on his own grade level and should take part in the regular curriculum and schedule whenever it is not of a nature to further endanger his vision. He should go to the sight-saving class and teacher only when those parts of the schedule that would overtax his visual capacity are engaged in by the class. At these times only and in the sight-saving room with special methods and equipment he will follow lessons similar in nature and content to those being held in the regular grade.

Need for a Sight-Saving Class

The idea that special educational facilities should be provided for the partially seeing child originated in Great Britain in the year 1902. This resulted in the establishment of the first sight-saving class in the world in London in 1908. The first venture to aid this group in the United States was attempted in Roxbury, Mass., in 1913, and later in the same year in Cleveland, Ohio. According to statistics issued by the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, April, 1952, there are at present 686 sight-saving classes in the United States, the territory of Hawaii, and the District of Columbia. Of this number *only three* are operated by parochial school systems. Great is the need for this type of special education in our schools. One out of every four hundred children has a visual defect which prevents him from taking advantage of many of the educational opportunities which are offered to normally seeing children. There are 50,000 visually handicapped children in the United States. Blindness is on the increase in America. In America alone 420 persons lose their sight every week making a round number of 22,000 per year. Medical authorities tell us that at least half of these cases could have been prevented if proper measures were taken in due time. One of the chief measures advocated by these same authorities is the organization of sight-saving classes for partially seeing children.

Due to lack of proper facilities in parochial schools many of our Catholic partially seeing children are registered in the sight-saving classes in public schools. In some of our schools teachers who are already overburdened with crowded classrooms and who are overtaxed with the multiplicity of details and activities connected with the curriculum, are struggling without the aid of necessary equipment and training, to give the partially seeing child the education which is his right. Obviously, this is an injustice to the teacher and to the child.

Objectives of the Sight-Saving Class

The *immediate* objective of the sight-saving class is to provide an education with the least possible eyestrain for the partially seeing child, to teach the child to use his eyes correctly and effectively. Sight saving does not mean nonuse but rather correct and effective use of the eyes and it is on this principle that the sight-saving program is based. This objective is reached through the use of special physical equipment and educational media geared to meet the needs of the child. A classroom well lighted naturally and artificially is the first step toward the fulfillment of this goal. Correctly printed textbooks in clear type, large chalk, pencils with dark lead, green chalkboards, bulletin typewriters, and sound devices are some of the major features taking prominence in relieving the eyestrain of the child. The use of craft materials furnishes eye rest periods for the child and at the same time develops the sense of touch and brings out the creative abilities of the child. Various teaching techniques also work toward this immediate objective, such as instruction by word, picture, posters, and the like on eye hygiene and the proper care of the eye.

The ultimate objective of this special class is to prepare the partially seeing child to take his place in the world among normally sighted beings, to teach him how to live in terms of happiness and accomplishment rather than failure and frustration, for ultimately, teaching our children how to live is the only genuine curriculum. The chief educational technique employed in the striving for this objective is a psychological one. While taking cognizance of the handicap and limitations of the child, the educator must chart and stress the child's assets, try to develop new assets in him, lead the child to dream a realistic dream of what he can do in spite of his handicap, and furthermore help him to actualize this dream. The standard of accomplishment for the handicapped must be measured not so much in terms of scholastic achievement as in terms of human adjustment.

Industrial Arts at Stepinac High School

*Rev. Marion Schuetz, C.S.V.**

A DREAM of the Cardinal Archbishop of New York became a realization in September, 1948, when Archbishop Stepinac High School opened its doors. Since its inception, the school has done everything possible to make even more realistic the well-earned title given to Francis Cardinal Spellman — "The Cardinal of Education." To further the objective of every Catholic student in a Catholic school, Archbishop Stepinac High School offers an efficient industrial-arts program. His Eminence entrusted the establishment, direction, and teaching of this department to the Viatorian Fathers and Brothers of Chicago, Ill., as this religious community has men who are specialists in the field of industrial arts.

Courses Offered

The first year that the school was in operation only freshmen and sophomore students were admitted and a general comprehensive shop course was instituted as the practical approach to the oncoming program. Now a student may take a major in the field of industrial arts or may take any of the courses as an elective. The following year, courses for the junior year students included general woodwork, general electricity, and general metalwork. Additional classroom space and equipment was necessary to permit seniors to continue in the field of industrial arts, cabinet-making, photography, and radio electronics were added to the program schedule in 1951. This again called for added classroom space and great expenditures for the necessary equipment — all of which the diocese readily undertook because it understood the urgency of training our youth along these lines.

However, our efforts to give our youth of today that which they deserve did not end with the above because this present year has seen the addition of the student driver education course with both phases — classroom and car instruction. This course was made possible through the co-operation of the local AAA and the local Pontiac automobile dealer. Archbishop Stepinac High School thus becomes the first Catholic boys high school in the Archdiocese of New York to grant this much needed training to its students. This is a one-semester, one-half-credit course. For the present year only two class groups per semester are being permitted to enroll in the course, but we hope to extend this opportunity to many more students in the coming school year.

The main purpose of this course is to produce not only better drivers among our teen-age lads through lessons in safety, courtesy, and proper driver and pedestrian attitudes, but also so they may assist others in cutting down accident fatalities. The day seems not too far distant when this course will become as mandatory in our high school curriculums as English and mathematics are now. Its necessity is well recognized by state and school authorities. The 1951 accident statistics are well worth pondering in this regard. "Young men and women under 25 constitute about 15 per cent of the total of all drivers. Yet they must accept the blame for more than 25 per cent of 1951's fatal accidents and almost 21 per cent of the nonfatal accidents."[1] (These figures would not seem to include those large numbers of teen agers who are in the armed forces.) The time has come for school administrators to consider seriously their responsibility of making this a safer world in which to live. Stepinac, despite its youth in educational years, has joined in these ranks and invites others to join her and the other schools already having the safety programs in extending this opportunity to our American youth.

Not a Vocational School

Archbishop Stepinac High School operates under a liberal arts charter granted

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Editor's Note. Catholic school executives who are considering the introduction of industrial arts will be glad to know what other schools are doing in this field. Next month Father Coyne, O.S.A., will resume his series of articles with a discussion of "What Is Vocational Education?"

*Chairman of Industrial Arts at Archbishop Stepinac High School, White Plains, N. Y.

[1] *The Travelers 1952 Book of Street and Highway Accident Data*, p. 17.

by the New York Board of Regents and hence is not a vocational high school. Judging from the objectives under which our industrial-arts department operates, it becomes evident that our program is not a vocational one. Through the teaching of proper and appropriate attitudes, skills, and knowledge, we endeavor to train, through accomplishment on the part of the student, youth fitted to step into adult life the more and better equipped as trained consumers so that they may profit by and be profitable to our democratic way of life. The program thus gives evidence of having an exploratory characteristic — but we might add, exploratory in a somewhat directive sense. The student is permitted to choose his projects but must adapt them in accordance with processes being taught and in line with his own capabilities — the directiveness of the teacher enters the picture here. Also, allowance for individual differences must be taken into consideration and compensations made.

Complete Facilities

All the advantages of a shop library and planning center located within the shop area are at the disposal of the student. Numerous reference works, related materials, project plans, and drawing tables and equipment are there for his use. A written procedure of operations must accompany every working drawing of each individual project. This plan of procedure has been found to be educational, practical, and economical as to time, material, and the learning process. A tested and thorough knowledge of each piece of equipment to be used in the making of each project is a prerequisite before beginning the project. All of the above holds true whether the student be enrolled in courses in wood, metal, electricity, or photography.

The electronics course, which stresses the radio element, aims to equip the youth for advanced work in this field of endeavor. Although not taught from the vocational point of view, nevertheless, the air or purpose of the course may seem to produce the same as a vocational course in this subject due to the fact that once a student has completed the electronics course he is eligible for work and/or training as a technician. We must bear in mind that there are many similarities in the fields of industrial and vocational arts.

Correlation and Separation

It has been our aim to correlate the industrial-arts program as much as possible with the other work of the school. Numerous examples could be cited. For example, in our setup mechanical drawing forms a separate department and at least one year of mechanical drawing is urged for all students registering for the industrial-arts program. Four years of drawing courses are available. Likewise, because of the similarities of the fields, the art and photography programs are interrelated as much as possible as well as the chemistry and photography courses. However, the industrial-arts program includes its own special applied (shop) mathematics course taught by a member of the industrial-arts staff. Our relationship with the physics department has developed into an advanced physics (electronics) class which is being taught in the electronics laboratory by the physics instructor. Another step in the correlation of departments has brought about courses in communicative arts (radio dramatics) taught by the staff of the English department. These classes are conducted in the well-equipped radio studio which is in itself a division of the electronics department. This radio broadcast equipment has made possible another element of training which is of great value to our present-day student.

Accomplishment

Even though the aim of our program is not to prepare the boy for a trade as such, nevertheless industry has willingly accepted our graduates, and their abilities to do the job had been evidence of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired. We feel that the success of our program speaks for itself. At present, with an enrollment of approximately 1200 students, about 20 per cent are taking advantage of the industrial-arts program.

Grouping in Teaching Reading

*Rev John A. O'Brien, Ph.D.**

THE balanced basic reading program is one in which *each child* gets an opportunity to grow in reading abilities and skills at a time when he is able to grasp the ideas and skills presented. A lesson may be fine for most of your third grade or your eighth grade and yet may be a complete waste of time for little Mary Ellen or big slow-moving John Joseph. It is a program in which a child may grow in the ability to *grasp ideas, relate them to one another* in various ways, and *use those ideas* in the light of reason and past learning.

Planned Vocabulary Growth

If a child is to grow in the ability to get ideas from the printed page, the teaching of reading must provide *vocabulary growth* which is *planned* and adequate, and not left to chance. The plan must provide both *exposure* to a large vocabulary of useful words and a scientifically worked out *word perception program* in which the child actually masters several different methods of attacking words — the use of *word-form clues, context clues,* the *structural analysis* of words, the *phonetic analysis* of words and syllables, and the *use of the dictionary* for getting word meanings, pronunciations, and spelling. With this method the child's *experience is utilized in helping him learn to read,* and as his progress warrants it, his *ability to read is utilized in helping him to broaden his experience.*

*University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Ind.

Variety of Material

The balanced basic reading program is one which opens the doorways of experience to a child by giving him groups of stories — used by the teacher as the core of units of reading experiences — which include all the types of reading material in the field of children's literature which are suitable to the interest level of the child. By the middle grades, the child whose reading program is balanced reads, in the course of a year, groups of stories in the areas of: (1) children's activities (the human-interest stories of the age level); (2) people of the past; (3) inventive science and discovery; (4) fancy and imagination; (5) people of other lands; (6) natural science; (7) biography; (8) child classics. For the past several years much emphasis has been placed on individual reading, on the individual development of the individual child's ability to perform. Certainly, every child *must* gain *his own* strength and develop his own power in reading, *yet* our emphasis upon the individual has in some cases *caused us to forget* how much all of us as individuals *depend upon others* for helping us shape our ideas and ways of thinking.

Groups Are Essential

The importance to a child of *working in groups* with others is so tremendous that we can only sympathize with the pupil who

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